

Message Text

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S/PRS - MR. KING (INFO)

IO/P - MR. BLACHLY

AF/P - MRS. RUSSELL

-- MISS FOLGER (INFO)

NEA/EGY - MR. STERNER

EUR/P - MR. SAVAGE

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R 181955Z SEP 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION NATO

SECDEF

USINT BAGHDAD BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY SANAA BY POUCH

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SECDEF FOR ISA AND DSAA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING IS PARTIAL
EXCERPT FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING
SEPTEMBER 18, 1973:

QUOTE: Q. A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO YOU WERE ASKED HERE ABOUT
THE STATUS OF TALKS WITH SAUDI ARABIA ON SALES OF PHANTOM
PLANES. COULD YOU TELL US WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THOSE
TALKS? HAS THE DEPARTMENT ANY INFORMATION ABOUT SAUDI
ARABIA OPTING FOR MIRAGES?

A. WITH REFERENCE TO OUR POSITION, THE STATUS OF THAT, IT'S
MY UNDERSTANDING THAT WE ARE PROVIDING TECHNICAL BRIEFINGS
ON THE PHANTOMS NOW.

Q. THIS WAS TWO WEEKS AGO TOO. IS IT STILL GOING ON, THE
TECHNICAL BRIEFINGS?

A. I THINK SO, YES. WITH REFERENCE TO THE MIRAGES. WE'VE
SEEN THE PRESS ACCOUNTS, BUT I THINK REALLY THAT IN ORDER
TO ADDRESS THAT YOU SHOULD SPEAK TO THE FRENCH OR TO THE
SAUDIS.

Q. THE QUESTION REALLY IS, WHETHER YOU GOT ANY MESSAGE
FROM SAUDI ARABIA, "NO, THANK YOU, WE ARE NOT INTERESTED
IN THE PHANTOMS ANY MORE."

A. NO, THE SITUATION AS OF NOW, AT THE PRESENT TIME, IS THE
FACT THAT WE ARE ENGAGED IN SOME OF THESE TECHNICAL BRIEF-
INGS AND THAT OUR OFFER, OUR WILLINGNESS, TO SELL PHANTOMS,
AS FAR AS I KNOW, IS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE
SAUDIS.

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Q. I'M NOT SURE WHAT A TECHNICAL BRIEFING IS. YOU MEAN
TECHNICAL AS REGARDS HOW PLANES FLY, OR TECHNICAL TO THE
SALE ITSELF. WHAT WOULD THESE CONVERSATIONS, WHICH, AS
FAR AS WE KNOW, HAVE BEEN GOING ON FOR AT LEAST THREE
WEEKS, INVOLVE?

A. WELL, LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN FIND OUT. QUITE FRANKLY,
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE DETAILS, THE SPECIFICS, ARE OF A
TECHNICAL BRIEFING, BUT THEY ARE NOT, OBVIOUSLY,
DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE CONSUMMATION OF THE SALE. IT
WOULD BE SOMETHING PRELIMINARY TO THAT.

Q. LAST JUNE WHEN MR. SISCO BRIEFED THE CONGRESSIONAL
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE NEAR EAST, HE SAID THAT THEY ARE
WAITING FOR A RESPONSE FROM THE SAUDIS.

NOW, HAS THERE BEEN A DEVELOPMENT SINCE THEN? HAVE THE SAUDIS SAID, "YES, WE WANT THE PLANES," OR "NO, WE DON'T WANT THEM"? JUST WHERE DO WE STAND ON THIS THING? BECAUSE IT'S MORE THAN THREE WEEKS, IT GOES NOW INTO THE FOURTH MONTH, AS I SEE IT.

A. LOOK, IF I CAN GO ON BACKGROUND. IT'S NOT UNUSUAL AT ALL IN ANY OF THESE MILITARY SALES ARRANGEMENTS FOR THEM TO DRAG ON FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME. AND I THINK WE TRIED TO MAKE THAT CLEAR AT THE TIME WE FIRST DISCUSSED THIS QUESTION. AND, YOU KNOW, THESE THINGS DO GO ON. AND THEY ARE LARGELY DEPENDENT IN LARGE MEASURE ON THE GOVERNMENTS THAT WISH TO PURCHASE THE ARMS.

Q. IS THE NEWSPAPER REPORT YOU REFERRED TO, OR WE REFERRED TO, ON THE MIRAGES THE FIRST YOU HEARD ABOUT THIS DEAL BETWEEN FRANCE AND SAUDI ARABIA? DIDN'T YOU GET ANY INFORMATION FROM THE EMBASSY IN PARIS, FOR INSTANCE? DO THEY KEEP AN EYE ON SUCH THINGS?

A. WE CAN'T CONFIRM THE STORIES THAT WE'VE SEEN. THERE HAVE OBVIOUSLY BEEN DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE FRENCH AND

SAUDIS, BUT WE DON'T HAVE ANY CONFIRMATION THAT ANY
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DECISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE. BUT IN ANY EVENT, WE WOULDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT ANY FURTHER SINCE IT REALLY IS UP TO THOSE TWO GOVERNMENTS TO RESPOND TO THOSE TYPES OF QUESTIONS.

Q. THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT CONSIDER THAT ANY SUCH PURCHASES MIGHT AFFECT ITS OWN DESIRE WHETHER OR NOT TO SELL TO SAUDI ARABIA AND WOULD NOT AFFECT THE POSSIBLE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE PERSIAN GULF OR THE MIDDLE EAST? DO YOU CONSIDER THAT ARMS SALES OF THAT NATURE ARE SUI GENERIS TO THEMSELVES ALONE?

A. I THINK FIRST OF ALL WE HAVE TO MAKE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT WE DON' HAVE ANY CONFIRMATION THAT THERE HAS BEEN ANY SALE OF MIRAGES AND TRANSFER OF MIRAGES TO SAUDI ARABIA. I WOULD SAY THAT IN TERMS OF OUR GENERAL VIEWS ON MILITARY BALANCE IN THE AREA, THEY HAVE BEEN STATED.

Q. YOU SAID THAT THIS TYPE OF EXTENDED DELIBERATIONS IS NOT UNUSUAL. BY WAY OF COMPARISON, HOW ABOUT THE PLANES FOR IRAN? HAVE THEY INVOLVED EXTENDED DISCUSSIONS, OR IS IT A PRETTY SMOOTH PROCESS, BY CONTRAST, IF POSSIBLE?

A. I CAN'T CONTRAST IT DIRECTLY WITH ANY OTHER INSTANCE SUCH AS IRAN. LET ME REPEAT THOUGH WHAT WE, IN FACT,

HAVE DONE SO FAR. FIRST, WE INDICATED A WILLINGNESS IN PRINCIPLE TO SELL A LIMITED NUMBER OF F-4'S OR PHANTOMS TO SAUDI ARABIA- SECONDLY, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME OF THESE TECHNICAL BRIEFINGS WHICH HAVE BEEN TAKING PLACE. IT'S UP TO THE SAUDIS THEMSELVES TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT THEY WANT TO BUY THE PLANES.

Q. THE INFERENCE I GET IS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT NOW. IT SUGGESTS THAT MAYBE THE SAUDIS ARE RECONSIDERING. ARE YOU TRYING TO GIVE US THAT MESSAGE?

A. NO, I'M NOT TRYING TO SPEAK FOR THE SAUDIS AT ALL.

Q. IF I FOLLOW YOU CORRECTLY, AT THIS POINT THINGS ARE PROTRACTED, THE STRESS YOU PUT IS ON THE OTHER SIDE, THE UNCLASSIFIED

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SAUDIS , AND WHETHER THEY WANT THE DEAL TO GO THROUGH. SO I ASK YOU IF THE UNITED STATES, WHICH SITS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TABLE, HAS ANY IMPRESSION NOW THAT THE SAUDIS DON'T WANT THE PLANES.

A. ALL I CAN SAY AT THIS TIME FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW IS THAT THE SAUDIS STILL HAVE OUR OFFER UNDER CONSIDERATION.

Q. THESE VARIOUS NEGOTIATIONS THAT HAVE GONE ON, TECHNICALLY AND OTHERWISE, HAVE THE SAUDIS SOUGHT TO GET THE UNITED STATES TO WAIVE THE PROVISION AGAINST THE THIRD-PARTY TRANSFERS?

A. I DON'T KNOW, SPECIFICALLY IF THEY HAVE OR HAVE NOT.

Q. IF YOU CAN'T SPEAK FOR THE SAUDIS, YOU CAN, I THINK, SPEAK FOR US. MR. SISCO SAID THAT WE WOULD INSIST ON SUCH A PROVISION. ARE WE STILL INSISTING ON A PROVISION AGAINST THIRD-PARTY TRANSFERS, HOWEVER THE SAUDIS MAY FEEL ABOUT IT?

A. I CAN SAY THAT THERE IS NO INTENTION FOR US TO WAIVE THIS LONGSTANDING PROVISION, WHICH EXISTS IN ALL OF OUR MILITARY ARMS CONTRACTS. END QUOTE. RUSH

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